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IN SEARCH OF A LIFE OF MY OWN

In early April 1968, I drove my car into downtown Washington, DC. I had just returned from six weeks in Reno, Nevada, having secured a quickie divorce on March 25, ending a twenty-four-year marriage to a Dr. Allan McKelvie. I had married a dashing Scottish navy doctor at the height of World War II while still a teenager. Much had changed since my days as a naïve young bride. On that day I had an appointment with my divorce lawyer, Edmund D. Campbell, whose office was near Fourteenth Street and New York Avenue, the heart of downtown, just two blocks from the White House.

For much of that year a thick psychic fog had enveloped me like a damp sheet, making even the most routine task seem awkward and clumsy. Ending a long marriage, upsetting my four children, and trying to seize control over and improve my own life clouded my thinking and at times overwhelmed me. It clearly never occurred to me that I might be in danger driving the few blocks from my room on Massachusetts Avenue to the lawyer's office. Had I been in my right mind, I would have realized that the city was quite literally on fire that day.

Just the night before, the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr., the inspiring civil rights leader, had been murdered in Memphis, Tennessee, as he stood on a motel balcony. In those days Washington was still very much a southern city in terms of style and custom. From a legal standpoint, one would call it *de facto* segregated. The laws did not separate blacks from whites, but practice most definitely did. The black residents lived in their own neighborhoods and were an almost invisible presence in the rest of the nation's capital. They were

there but not there, if you know what I mean. Most African Americans held service jobs. They drove taxicabs, waited on tables, and mowed the beautiful green lawns in the largely white and affluent northwest quadrant of the city where I lived. While women were seen and not heard in those days, the black people were silent and barely seen. They were like the infrastructure of the city, like traffic signs or streetlights. Their presence was simply taken for granted. A few African American pioneers had broken through the social and cultural constraints of the time with tenacity and education to become doctors, lawyers, or even museum directors, like my good friend John Kinnard. But black professionals were rare, and it was difficult to meet them in everyday life. As I came to understand later, the black community had its own hierarchy and social life, a life that was invisible to the white majority.

Dr. King's death broke the heart of a community that looked to him for inspiration and leadership. It also understandably enraged them. The rioting began within hours of his death on Thursday night, April 4. By the time I unwittingly drove to Ed Campbell's office the next day, the riots had spread to the core of downtown Washington. Teenagers raced through Woodward & Lothrop, screaming at the top of their lungs and scaring half to death every white person within earshot. As I hunted for a parking spot on New York Avenue, I came upon a mob of young African American men who had smashed the window of a clothing store. They literally clambered over the front of my car, their faces inches from my own. I sat transfixed in my locked car. While it was initially a bit frightening to see such ferocity and unleashed energy, I quickly realized the young men, the ages of my own children, were much more interested in the contents of the shop than in me. They seemed to be having a wonderful time, trying on the pilfered clothing in the middle of the city street. The exuberance was unmistakable. I rather enjoyed watching them trying on and discarding this jacket and that pair of shoes and having such a delightful time of it. I suppose it was a totally inappropriate response on my part. After all, they were looting, which is illegal.

The riots were costly in many ways for Washington. A dozen people died, and more than one thousand others were badly injured. More than twelve hundred buildings, including nine hundred businesses, burned to the ground. Sadly, the black community itself paid the highest price for the riots. Those businesses provided jobs to many black people, and many were owned by African American businessmen. The rubble remained untouched for decades, turning a once vibrant shopping area into a wasteland that only began to revive in the twenty-first century, a good forty-odd years later. It also sparked more white flight from the city and a quicker exodus of the black middle class.

Washington's ethnic breakdown flipped from two-thirds white and one-third black to three-fourths black and one-fourth white in twenty years. The true tragedy for the city was that the black middle class, the sturdy bedrock of the black community, effectively abandoned Washington, leaving behind the poorest, least educated, and least able to move up the economic ladder. The white people who remained tended to be the most affluent, best educated, and, not really surprisingly, most liberal. As a result, Washington, DC, became a polarized city of economic extremes over time, though still reliably Democratic in every national election.

It may seem a bit odd for an Anglo-Saxon woman raised in Great Britain to begin her memoir with this image of black rage, but the decade of the 1960s represented a turning point in my life. Just as the black people who had lived with so much unfairness and oppression for so long finally exploded and demanded the rights they were entitled to under the law, I made my own small step toward personal liberation. I certainly am not comparing myself to people who were systematic victims of overwhelming discrimination dating back to slavery. In many respects, I enjoyed a life of privilege as a white woman from a family with some means. But I did empathize with the black people's plight. I could hardly blame them for exploding in anger and frustration. I had some sense of what it felt like to be treated as less than an equal.

I did not burn my bra or make a dramatic political statement—I got a divorce. Nine months after asking for the divorce and effectively ending my first marriage, I married again, this time to a man who treated me as an equal partner. He happened to be a prominent public official, Richard M. Helms, the director of central intelligence (DCI) for the United States and a man both celebrated and denounced for keeping the nation's secrets. We were very happily married for thirty-four years, and during that marriage I came into my own as a separate and unique person.

Being born with a curious mind can be either a blessing or a curse. My nature made me an explorer of people, places, and things. I simply could not be any other way; some inextricable force impelled me to learn and seek and investigate and always keep moving forward. When I ended one marriage and began another after completing the most demanding years raising my children, I had the most wonderful time and some of the most rewarding experiences of my life. Moshe Dayan personally showed me his archeological artifacts at his home in Israel. King Hussein of Jordan carried my suitcase and took me water skiing. For four remarkable years as an ambassador's wife, I explored the treasures and culture of ancient Persia in Iran before the overthrow of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi. I listened enrapt as Golda Meir

delivered an impromptu geopolitical assessment of the world from the sofa in her living room while smoking a cigarette. The now famous society doyennes of Georgetown were some of my closest friends. I played cards with a Supreme Court chief justice, chatted with a Beatle, and cheered the first U.S. astronaut to circle the Earth.

I grew up on a farm in rural England and dodged bombs and steered boats through black seas as a young navy sea woman during World War II. Those experiences molded my character. But not until my middle years did I have the opportunity to satisfy the thirst of my mind. I dug through the treasures of the extraordinary richness of the Smithsonian Institution with a weekly interview radio show in what I view as the first “real” job of my life. Each week I interviewed another remarkable curator, scientist, or thinker from one of the obscure dusty cubicles of the United States’ own national museum and learned about this specialty or that genre of art. A concern for the environment led me and a few friends to begin an environmental campaign to alert American housewives to the presence of toxic materials such as phosphates in soap and lead in paint many years before such environmental awareness became commonplace. In this way, I achieved a great deal of personal fulfillment.

An old proverb holds that history is written by the victors. Men were the victors. History was largely written by men and about male exploits and achievements. With a few exceptions, women were footnotes, playing a supporting role as wives, daughters, consorts, or muses. Women, from a historical perspective, were simply not that important, although, let’s be honest, there would be no history without them. In the course of my lifetime, which has stretched over three-fourths of the twentieth century and a good part of the start of the twenty-first, the role and status of women in Western culture—indeed, in much of the civilized world—changed. It was a change for the better. In the twentieth century, women won or affirmed many rights, including the right to vote, to hold property, and to the opportunity to express personal talent and pursue professions. Legal equality did not eliminate all discrimination, but the differences in the quality of lives of girls and women between then and now are dramatic.

Opportunity for girls was far less expansive when I was born in 1923 between the two world wars. Victorian-era morality and mores lingered, limiting women to very specific roles as wives, mothers, and helpers. At the time, all those rules were characterized by submission to a male will. As I grew into adulthood and then middle age, women began chafing against the constraints of the traditional roles. I didn’t just witness the changes that allowed women

to become fully functioning and thinking members of society; I lived the changes. I quite desperately wanted a life of personal achievement independent of the accomplishments of my husbands and my children.

I spent fifty-eight years of my life married to two men. In many respects, the marriages defined my role in society. I was someone's wife. I was also the mother of four children who grew up to be excellent company as well as productive and caring and participating members of society. But I am more than a wife and mother, as are all women. I did not want marriage and my role as a wife and mother to be all that defined me.

In this book, I am going to tell stories from my life, stories my children and grandchildren are pressing me to tell. It feels very narcissistic to dwell on my life. I did not write a bestseller or invent a lifesaving medicine or achieve high position in government. Yet I have had an interesting life. Fate brought me into contact and proximity with the headliners and major events of my time. I knew Georgetown society matrons, presidents, kings, and ambassadors. My second husband, Dick Helms, one of the great spymasters of the twentieth century, had a wide circle of fascinating acquaintances and friends. I met many spies and much later learned the identities of the actual KGB spies assigned to spy on Director Helms's new wife in 1968.

At the same time, I came into my own as a person and must acknowledge I was helped along by the positive changes in the role and status of all women. My children, particularly my daughters, benefited from these same social and cultural changes and have had different choices and different opportunities. My daughters, Jill and Lindsay, both earned advanced academic degrees, just as my sons, Rod and Allan, did. I never lived through my children. I think parents who do that do a terrible injustice to their children. Yet I did find all of their achievements deeply satisfying. My grandchildren and great-grandchildren live in a world with almost unlimited opportunity, regardless of race or gender. It is human nature to take for granted that which is given. By understanding my history, perhaps they and others like them will more fully appreciate the wide, expansive opportunities they enjoy.

I begin this memoir in the 1960s, a decade of change and turmoil, which marked a great upheaval in my own life. With the benefit of hindsight, I see clearly that many forces helped me make the decision to end a less-than-fulfilling marriage and marry again. The cultural, political, and social order changed in the United States in the 1960s. The younger generation just coming of age, including my four children, questioned authority in a way that never would have been allowed, or even occurred to, their parents at their age. I was affected and influenced by the times in which I lived. The changes

and liberation movements popping up all around me probably emboldened me to seek my own liberation. The 1960s, with all their messiness, came after a decade of extraordinary stability. Those of us who survived World War II yearned for calm, home, security, and peace after the trauma of war. An entire generation suffered from a kind of posttraumatic stress disorder. It was not a specific mental disorder, like the one that sadly afflicts so many combat veterans today, but the war did deeply affect almost every life at every level. I lost dear friends and a couple of beaux in combat. War made us hungry and cold and stressed. Nearly everyone was involved in fighting the Axis powers during World War II. Each person did his or her bit. The men fought or produced goods to support the war effort. Those on the front lines saw so much death and destruction that most of them would not speak of it for decades afterward. At home the women took over jobs once held by men to free up men for the front lines, testing and stretching themselves beyond what they could have imagined. Elderly women knitted and crocheted scarves and gloves and caps for those of us in the military service. For Europeans, the war was immediate and threatening, and the skittishness that comes from living with the fear of sudden death lingered even after armistice.

World War II was a truly just war, one that absolutely had to be fought. The forces of oppression, hate, and true evil were simply compelling. No decent person could ignore the threat, and proudly, as a generation, we united and fought it. My generation has been called "The Greatest Generation," and I always felt that was a bit overdone. We did what we had to do. To ignore Adolf Hitler or the Japanese aggression was simply not conceivable. That we did not ignore it is, of course, a credit, but I still must say this task was thrust upon us, and I hope that every generation would aggressively fight that type of evil. Yes, we did step up to the challenge. But it was necessary. There truly was no other option.

World War II affected me more than I could have appreciated when I was an innocent teenager on the family farm in Essex, hanging on every stirring word Prime Minister Winston Churchill spoke on the radio each night. The radio was the Internet of our time, not nearly as comprehensive or responsive to whim but the primary source of news. The war made me grow up very quickly as I joined dozens of other young British women in the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS), known as the Wrens, doing the jobs that men had done manning the ships in British harbors. I grew from a protected eighteen-year-old girl into a more aware twenty-one-year-old woman, though I must say, as I look back, that when my military service ended because of my first pregnancy, I was still very naïve and unworldly and had so much yet to

learn. Still, the war taught me a great deal about human nature, human frailty, and human strength.

Women like me got a taste of freedom during the war because they left home and hearth and worked in jobs once held by men. But the social order quickly righted itself afterward, and the war came to be seen as an aberration. The overwhelming desire for home led to an idealization of the nuclear family and the role of wife and mother. Fathers, of course, could still go out and slay dragons in the business and corporate world. But women went back to the traditional role of homemaker. The long-established patterns reasserted themselves more firmly than ever. I did not resist this impulse at the time. I, too, wanted to fit in and live a peaceful life.

As a result, the 1950s became a decade of remarkable conformity. The man in the gray flannel suit became an iconic image of middle-class striving in lockstep in corporate America. Men worked to build the postwar prosperity, and women stayed home to keep house and raise children. This was expected of us. And the needs of the baby boom generation, all those millions of children born after the war ended, kept most of us quite busy.

The 1950s passed in a blur for me, as they did for many women raising children. Caring for four small children consumed my life, but as they grew older and more independent, I began to wonder if this was all there was. The taste for freedom I experienced as a Wren never left me. I did not go to university because of my military service and marriage during the war. Despite an excellent boarding school education, I yearned to learn more and took classes from time to time when the children were still young. I was not alone. The yearning for more was building in others at the same time.

While racial minorities in the United States had been freed from slavery in the nineteenth century, equality before the law proved elusive, and opportunity remained severely limited. They had waited long enough and demanded their rights in a civil rights movement that culminated with major legislation in that decade. Young people were embracing their own music, clothing, and lifestyles and questioning every single symbol of authority in every possible way. At the same time, many women were also growing frustrated at not having an opportunity to do more than change diapers, drive carpools, and cook dinner. The women's movement did not explode as dramatically as the civil rights or antiwar movements. It was far subtler. Betty Friedan had published *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963. At the time I paid little attention to the fledgling women's movement, although her book described women just like me. The book grew out of a survey Betty Friedan conducted in 1957 for the fifteenth reunion of her Smith College class. She discovered that many

of her classmates from the Class of 1942, mostly white, middle-class wives and mothers living in the suburbs, were unhappy despite the privilege and material comfort of their lives. She concluded that women needed meaningful work just as men do, and forcing women into limited roles as wives and mothers with no other outlets was “the problem that has no name.” It was a powerful manifesto that acted as an ignition switch for many women living lives of quiet desperation in their split-level ranch houses in fashionable cul-de-sacs ringing the cities of the United States. My own source of inspiration was the pioneer women of America, not the frustrated suburban housewives who looked just like me; still, the fact that so many others were demanding rights and acting on certainly affected the environment in which I lived. I clearly suffered from “the problem that has no name.”

Sociologists have analyzed the postwar period more thoroughly than I ever can. I do remember that the Cold War, the battle for global dominance between the United States and the Soviet Union, was chillingly pervasive. We feared a nuclear war perhaps more than was realistic because we remembered so acutely the incendiary bombs of World War II. The Cold War mentality grew directly out of the experiences of World War II. Indeed, it effectively began, particularly for people like my husband Dick, who was involved in intelligence during the war, before the timbers cooled from the hot war of World War II. That the ideology of the enemy differed had little relevance.

Joseph Stalin morphed from an ally during the war into as fierce and feared an opponent as Hitler because of the manner in which he consolidated and kept power. He died in 1953, but the Communist threat became, if anything, more ominous as the decade wore on. Then, when the Soviets launched Sputnik, the first satellite to orbit the Earth in 1957, the entire Western world shuddered at the thought the Soviets would outpace the West in the technology of the future. Few people remember now, but the big issue between John F. Kennedy and Richard M. Nixon in the 1960 presidential campaign concerned the alleged missile gap with the Soviet Union.

I suspect that the postwar period of outward conformity and underlying anxiety temporarily tamped down a lot of deeper issues that could not be denied by the 1960s. The chemical mix of factors fermented over time and then exploded in a series of shocks. These seismic shocks were experienced throughout the entire country, but the impact was profound in the capital. Each affected me or people I knew well.

The Cuban Missile Crisis, which brought the United States to the brink of nuclear war during John Kennedy’s term in office in 1962, terrified the entire country. Coming to the cusp of a nuclear war made everyone feel there

was no time to waste. It was not so different from the *carpe diem* sentiment of World War II, but there was a different sense, too, of the pillars of establishment disintegrating. President John F. Kennedy was assassinated on an early campaign trip in Dallas, Texas, in November 1963. I had attended teas held by the Kennedy women during the 1960 campaign at private homes in Washington. While I was not personally close to the Kennedy family, I knew many people who were very close to the Kennedys or held senior positions in the Kennedy administration, including the neighbors directly across from us on Forty-eighth Street, Charles and Martha Bartlett. The Bartletts introduced Jacqueline Bouvier to John F. Kennedy at a dinner party in their home in 1952. The president's death shocked everyone. John Kennedy was the first of his generation to win the White House, so his election signaled a coming of age for the World War II generation.

In 1968 both Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy, the former attorney general and the president's younger brother, were killed. Middle-class children were getting high on hallucinogenic drugs and dropping out of school and society. Racial riots were taking place in nearly all the major cities, and antiwar demonstrations grew louder and larger by the month. Terrible riots disrupted the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in the summer of 1968. The world seemed a bit unhinged.

In the 1960s the young challenged the very premise of the war in Vietnam. I initially had a difficult time understanding how anyone could question the government on such a grave issue. The World War II experience had made me dutiful, patriotic, and ready to stand up and smartly salute the commander in chief, or as it happened to be at the time, the queen. The universal draft put young male Americans at risk, however, and that draft contributed to the antiwar movement, which eventually succeeded in getting the United States out of Vietnam. I worried about the fate of my own oldest son, Rod, who graduated from Harvard in 1968. The draft did not end until 1973. Robert McNamara, the secretary of defense during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, once said he had dropped off his own son at an antiwar demonstration as he went into a White House national security meeting. The war in Vietnam literally ripped apart families. It was all anyone talked about at dinner parties in Washington. You were for it or not; the arguments were incredibly intense.

My own neighborhood in the northwest quadrant of the District of Columbia, then as now, looked very much like a suburb. The real suburbs were just becoming established in the 1950s, thanks to Dwight D. Eisenhower's federal interstate highway initiative and the widespread desire to own a

detached single-family house with a green lawn. The leafy streets of single-family homes in northwest Washington were populated by government officials, doctors, teachers, and other professionals. We led a comfortable life. By the 1960s, we belonged to a country club in northern Virginia. The children attended private schools. I played tennis with my friends. We went to cocktail parties and dinner parties at the homes of my husband's patients and friends.

Official Washington was still a relatively small community. There was a lot of cross-pollination between government, journalism, and the other professions. Service in the war, university education, and professional networks linked members of the community together. Many of my second husband's closest friends served with him in the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the forerunner of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), during World War II. As a British native, I often came in contact with others from my homeland. The graduates of Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and other Ivy League universities kept in touch after leaving school. The old boy's network was very real. Moreover, government service brought together people from different parts of the country and different backgrounds. This was long before social networks like Facebook, but the social connections brought together disparate elements.

Of course, we were literally neighbors too. Our children attended the same schools. We worked on community issues together. My first husband's patients included government officials, and his charitable work overseas brought invitations to state dinners and embassy parties. I still have a photograph of me and my first husband taken with Alice Roosevelt Longworth, the headstrong and controversial daughter of President Theodore Roosevelt and wife of House Speaker Nicholas Longworth, who was considered one of the great wits of her time. She lived for ninety-six years until 1980. We watched Arabian horses with her in Maryland one day in 1960, and her wit was as sharp as ever. My second husband also knew Alice, and she liked Dick quite a lot, so we were regulars at her wonderful parties in the 1960s. The interlocking circles of the different worlds in Washington at times gave my life a bit of a Zelig-like quality.

My first next-door neighbor in Washington was Major General Kester L. Hastings, the quartermaster general of the U.S. Army. He was responsible for providing food and clothing to the entire U.S. military and was intimately involved in construction of the Pentagon, then the world's largest office building, in a breathless seventeen months during World War II. He was a wonderful man, a career soldier, and a terrific neighbor. He mowed my lawn when he did his own. I appreciated it.

It often seemed as though the six-degrees-of-separation theory was at work in those years. I actually knew three of the women who were Jacqueline Kennedy's bridesmaids. Two of them told me they rarely saw her after the wedding. That made me wonder if the woman had any real friends. But I learned she did. Charles Whitehouse, a career Foreign Service officer who had worked in the early years of the CIA, kept an eye on Mrs. Kennedy's horse at Paul Mellon's farm in Virginia. Charlie had a solid friendship with her. I remember him telling me that she was an extraordinarily strong woman. She could handle any stallion.

When I first moved to Washington in 1951, I met the British ambassador, Sir Oliver Franks. A mutual friend arranged the introduction because we had small children who were close in age. That introduction made us part of the expat list invited to the occasional embassy function. My first husband's charitable work in the developing world also opened the doors to embassy functions and an invitation to a state dinner at the White House for Jordan's King Hussein, whom I actually got to know far better when my second husband served as head of central intelligence and then ambassador to Iran.

My neighbor who lived just three doors away from the first house we owned in Washington, Kathleen Stans, often invited me to official government events in the 1950s. Her husband, Maurice Stans, served as director of the Bureau of the Budget, a forerunner of the Office of Management and Budget, during the Eisenhower years and later as commerce secretary during the Nixon administration. Her husband became pulled into the Watergate scandal when he served as treasurer for the Committee to Reelect the President (CRP, also known as CREEP), Richard Nixon's reelection campaign committee in 1972. Maurice was indicted for perjury and obstruction of justice but cleared of any wrongdoing. I always thought Kathleen was quite lonely, but many women of that era were lonely because the men spent most of their time working or attending quasi-official social events to further their careers.

Work did not end at 5 p.m. It continued at cocktail parties and at private dinner parties throughout northwest Washington, in McLean, Virginia, just across the Potomac, and in Chevy Chase and Bethesda, Maryland. I do not think this happens today because senators and members of Congress tend to leave their families at home, so they are rarely in town on weekends. A great deal of information was exchanged over hors d'oeuvres and canapés. The socializing was a form of work; senators chatted with government officials in a relaxed, comfortable setting, a drink or two or three loosening their tongues and encouraging a level of human interaction that made it easier to find common ground.

We often joined the regular crowd in a Georgetown social scene that became emblematic of the era: we had dinner at the Georgetown homes of Polly Wisner Fritchey, Kay Graham, Pam Harriman, and Joseph and Stewart Alsop and elegant brunches with oysters at Evangeline Bruce's home. My second husband needed to make appearances at many official functions, particularly embassy events, and we got quite expert at the twenty-minute cameo and quick escape out the back door. Dick Helms knew the back exit to every embassy in Washington.

While a White House invitation is always a great privilege and honor, I became reluctant to attend White House functions during the Nixon administration, when my husband retained his job as director of central intelligence, because I got so depressed seeing Pat Nixon. I had an immediate and visceral reaction to her. I felt deeply sorry for her. She had the telltale pained, pinched look of a beleaguered spouse. During his early years as president, Richard Nixon invited us to a birthday party for Pat. She had been born on March 16, the day before St. Patrick's Day, always a great time for a celebration. Her husband, the president, never once mentioned her name in his remarks at the event even though it was her birthday and her party. He ignored her.

Years later, Dick Helms called me after the opening of the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library on November 4, 1991. I was eating cold cuts in Florida with a group of African women and did not attend. The Reagan Library opening celebration featured five living presidents—Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, and George H. W. Bush—and six First Ladies. After the event, my husband was standing among a small group of men outside. As Mrs. Nixon walked to the limousine, she fell to the ground. She was seventy-nine years old at the time and quite frail. She had suffered a stroke a few years earlier and would die of lung cancer two years later. Nixon refused to allow any of the men to help her to her feet. Dick could not believe what he was seeing. He said it was the most terrible scene. She literally could not stand up. Mike Deaver, the longtime Reagan aide, later told me the exact same story. It did not surprise me. I had an intuitive sense of their relationship when I met them. I thought he was mean to her. News reports said Nixon sobbed out loud at her funeral in 1993. It was taken as a sign of deep grief. I hope he realized what a good woman she had been. History did not treat her well. Poor Pat deserved better.

Washington, DC, offers opportunities to its residents that many take for granted. But as a British native, I never passed up the chance to expose my children to the wonders and opportunities in the city. I took my four children to the White House for a special reception for John Glenn on February 26,

1962, after he became the first man to orbit the Earth in Friendship 7 just six days earlier. The children found it very exciting to see this genuine American hero in person. I did too.

Two years later, I became the envy of every teenage girl in the neighborhood on the day the Beatles, the British singing sensation, played a concert in Washington on their first American tour. I was invited to a reception for them at the British embassy on February 11, 1964. The Beatles were running late, apparently because of mobs of screaming fans, and I grew tired of standing, so I found a chair in a room off to the side of the main salon. Quite unexpectedly, I found myself sitting next to Paul McCartney, the so-called cute Beatle, who had sought the quiet of that room for the very same reason. We had a lovely chat. He was great fun. My daughters and their friends were deeply impressed.

At times, my family pulled me into the circle of official Washington. My older daughter, Jill, was a good friend of Lynda Bird Johnson, the older daughter of President Lyndon B. Johnson and Lady Bird Johnson; they had been classmates at the National Cathedral School, the female counterpart to St. Alban's School for Boys, a private Episcopal school in the shadow of the Washington National Cathedral. After her father became president, Lynda would call Jill and ask her to round up their friends and bring them to the White House to play bridge. I fretted endlessly about Jill wearing loafers to the White House and carrying bags of potato chips with her. It seemed one ought to dress better when going to the White House, and the snacks just seemed inappropriate somehow. Invariably, there were changes in the bridge foursome between the phone call from Lynda and the arrival at the White House. When the guards asked who was in the car, Jill would counter with her own question—Who is on the list?—and insist that the identities on the list matched exactly the girls who rode in the car with her. Needless to say, security at the White House has been appreciably beefed up since that time.

Much to my chagrin, Jill always brought bags and bags of potato chips and other snacks with her. Evidently, there was nothing to eat at the White House after the kitchen closed. And Lady Bird Johnson kept a hawk-like eye on the president's diet ever since his near-fatal heart attack at the age of forty-seven in 1955. The heart attack caused him to quit his heavy smoking and avoid things like potato chips, except when Jill and the girls were around. Jill said the president never failed to show up and carry off some treats.

The Sunday after John Kennedy was killed, Lady Bird Johnson called Jill and asked her to contact Lynda Bird, who was just coming home from the University of Texas. She wanted her daughters to be surrounded by familiar

and reassuring friendly faces. It was so characteristic of Lady Bird to be sensitive to the needs of her daughters at a time of national trauma when she had to be utterly overwhelmed by the events of that tragic day and her husband's unexpected ascension to the presidency. Dick and I visited the Johnsons at the ranch after he left office, and she was always a gracious and kind hostess and an exceptionally nice woman.

My tennis pals included people who were considered members of the A list of Washington society. B. A. Bentsen, the wife of Lloyd Bentsen, the long-time senator from Texas who became treasury secretary during the Clinton administration, and I played tennis together for dozens of years. Sandra Day O'Connor, the first woman to sit on the Supreme Court, was another close friend and tennis partner. We became great friends because she said she wanted to have friends who were not lawyers. Sandra is a formidable woman with a tremendous career as a lawyer, legislator, and Supreme Court justice. But I would sometimes have to hold down Dick Helms when she lectured him on how to play bridge. He did not always take well to her bossy ways. Sandra did not discriminate. She once tried to tell Sharon Osberg, a women's world champion bridge player who taught Warren Buffett and Bill Gates to play the game, how to make a move.

After my marriage to Richard Helms, Polly Wisner, then the widow of Frank Wisner, who had been Dick's boss at the CIA, acted as my guide to the Georgetown set. She later married Clayton Fritchey, a syndicated columnist who also had a long career in public service.

It is with some bemusement that I look back on my life and realize that people who were just dear friends to me became historically significant figures in the various dramas of the federal government. Katharine Graham, the publisher of the *Washington Post*, and Pamela Harriman, the Democratic Party doyenne and fund-raiser who became the U.S. ambassador to France at the end of her storied life, were women whose company I enjoyed. I did not quite realize it at the time, but my proximity to and engagement with these famous people also gave me an insight into the events of the time that few in the public can enjoy. I knew these people as individuals. And those human characteristics are often telling and revealing when one looks back on the decisions and actions of their time.

I saw close up the deceit of Richard Nixon. I recognized his genius at foreign policy because Dick Helms, a discerning observer of the powerful, had a full appreciation of Nixon's deep knowledge and insight. But I was there the night Dick got a phone call from the CIA security officer informing him of a break-in at the Watergate Office Building at the headquarters of the

Democratic National Committee. And I listened to Dick worry out loud and try to figure out what Nixon and his senior White House aides were attempting to do as they strove, without success, to position Dick and the CIA as the responsible parties behind their own illegal activity.

I saw the physical toll that the war in Vietnam took on Lyndon Johnson. His anguish over the war was real and deep, and I'm certain it shortened his life. Later, it was difficult to see Dick Helms publicly humiliated when he followed the law and his own internal moral code and declined to tell an unauthorized Senate committee anything about a CIA covert operation in Chile. I took note of the deceptiveness of the U.S. senator who publicly asked my husband questions that he knew from his own private briefing could not be answered in that forum.

It was a curious time. The big events of the decade—the civil rights movement, the space race, the first man on the moon, the war in Vietnam—all played out live on television screens for the first time. At the same time, there were always hidden agendas at work. In an era when the public was actually seeing more events as they took place—or, in those days before live television, shortly after they occurred—I began to question appearances.

Dick Helms made a game of this inside/outside dichotomy. Leaking stories and information is a Washington pastime. It is intrinsic to the ways of governance in a system with three coequal branches. Members of Congress whisper to reporters; senators counter by slipping an internal memo to another journalist; White House aides tell tales to congressional staff, who pass them onto their bosses, who drop the morsels of information during cocktail parties like so many delicacies. The bird crumbs of information litter the city.

While Dick always kept his counsel about the true secrets of the United States, he gave me an inside view of this game. Over breakfast each morning we worked our way through a stack of newspapers, including the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Wall Street Journal*. Dick playfully guessed at the sources of the various leaks that made up the headlines of the newspapers. Of course, it was often sheer speculation, but I venture he was rarely wrong. He was the quintessential insider.

The journey that brought me to that point had begun on a lovely English farm forty-five years before.